



STATE SENATOR **Wayne Kuipers**

30TH SENATE DISTRICT E-MAIL UPDATE



Legislation Would Reward Healthy Behavior with Lower Insurance Rates

Insurance companies will be allowed to create health incentive programs that reward healthy behavior under legislation recently introduced in the Senate. The plan would require insurers, HMOs and non-profit health care corporations to offer wellness coverage and provide premium rebates for participation. Currently, health insurance companies, unlike life, home or auto insurance carriers, are forbidden by state law from offering incentives for good behavior. The legislation, Senate Bills 848 and 849, would allow individuals who exercise, refrain from smoking, and are compliant with treatment to see a benefit in their pocketbook

Rising health care costs have taken their toll on every sector in Michigan, including manufacturers, schools and state government. This has forced employers to drop health coverage, lay off workers or require employees to pay more. A 2004 Altarum study found that Michigan, when compared with selected benchmark states, ranked second highest in obesity, sixth highest in smoking, highest in coronary heart disease and second highest in diabetes. In addition, overweight and obese individuals incur up to \$1,500 more in annual medical costs than healthy-weight individuals.

Senator Kuipers Helps Restore Funding to Grand Haven State Police Post

The Senate restored state funding to the Michigan State Police posts in Grand Haven, Groveland Township and Iron River, restored funding to the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES), as well as the Fire Investigation Unit. Funding for these operations had not been included in the main state police budget recently approved by the Legislature.

The \$1.9 million MCOLES cut recommended by the Governor would have jeopardized critical training funds granted to local police departments. With MCOLES grants, police officers take part in state of the art in-service training that keeps them current on security issues, including homeland security matters.

Members of the Michigan State Police Fire Investigation Unit provide assistance to local governments investigating suspicious fires as well as expert witness testimony in arson trials. Because most local units of government do not have their own arson investigation expert, the Governor's recommendation to entirely eliminate the program could have left many of the state's suspicious fires uninvestigated.

Bills to Protect Essential Veterans Programs Pass the Senate

The Michigan State Senate overwhelmingly approved legislation to help the children of deceased or disabled veterans attend college while protecting the integrity of a fund intended to provide emergency grants to veterans. The Veterans Tuition Grant Program provides undergraduate tuition assistance for the children of deceased or disabled veterans. The Michigan Veterans Trust Fund serves as an emergency reserve fund for veterans in need of assistance with medical bills, utility costs, taxes and food. Both programs are facing financial difficulties and threat of discontinuation.

House Bills 4001 and 4002 would shift responsibility for the tuition program from the Trust Fund to the Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority. In addition, HB 5091 creates an income tax check-off that would allow Michigan taxpayers to contribute \$2 or more to the Michigan Higher Education Assistance Authority for the Children

of Veterans Tuition Program. The Children of Veterans Tuition program check-off could generate an estimated \$500,000 to \$1 million annually.

Senate Passes *MI Home* Legislation to Protect Private Property Owners

The rights of Michigan's private property owners will be defined thanks to a constitutional amendment and bill approved by the Michigan Senate. Following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Kelo v. City of New London* case, which allows the seizure of private property for private economic development projects, a constitutional amendment was drafted, dubbed *MI Home*, to help protect the rights of Michigan's private property owners. Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) E is designed to strengthen Michigan's constitution by defining public use.

The *MI-Home* legislation makes it very clear that private property cannot be taken for private purposes. It establishes that the burden of proof is not on private residents to prove their property should not be taken. Rather, it is on the government to prove it has a valid claim for eminent domain. Senate Bill (SB) 693 will strengthen Michigan's existing eminent domain statute and clarifies that private business economic development could not fall under this "public use" definition.

The proposals now head to the House of Representatives for consideration. If approved, SJR E is slated to be on the ballot for the 2006 election, while SB 693 would then head to the Governor's desk.